

Message Text

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E.O. N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PK, XF

SUBJ: PAK TIMES EDITORIAL ON MIDEAST

1. GOVERNMENT-OWNED PAKISTAN TIMES SEPTEMBER 17 CARRIED EDITORIAL ON MIDEAST "AGREEMENT AND AFTER" WHICH WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN ACCORD AND US ROLE IN ARRANGING IT. EDITORIAL ALSO INCLUDED PERSONAL ATTACK ON SECRETARY KISSINGER'S BONA FIDES.

2. EDITORIAL CHARGED THAT US AND ISRAELI DIPLOMACY HAD SUCCESSFULLY CREATED A CRISIS IN THE ARAB WORLD BY DIVIDING EGYPT FROM OTHER ARABS ON THE ISSUE OF THE AGREEMENT. IT STATED THAT PRESIDENT SADAR'S ASSURANCES THAT EGYPT HAS NOT CEASED TO BE INTERESTED IN FURTHER NECESSARY STEPS TOWARD PEACE WOULD NOT CONVINCE ARAB WORLD. IT ACCUSED USG OF PLANNING TO ARM ISRAEL DURING THE TIME GAINED BY THE INTERIM AGREEMENT TO THE POINT WHERE "ZIONISTS" COULD WIN THE NEXT ROUND OF WAR AT A TIME OF THEIR OWN CHOOSING. THE EDIT ENDED IN VIRULENTLY ANTI-ISRAEL AND ANTI-SEMITIC STATEMENTS AND CALLED ON THE SECRETARY "AS AN AMERICAN RATHER THAN JEW TO ADMONISH ISRAEL AGAINST ITS PERILOUS COURSES".

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3. IMMEDIATELY ON READING EDITORIAL AMBASSADOR SPOKE ON PHONE WITH MFA ADDITIONAL SECRETARY SHAHNAWAZ (SENIOR FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL IN ABSENCE OF FOREIGN SECRETARY AGHA SHAHI) TO PROTEST. HE HAD HARDLY BEGUN SPEAKING WHEN SHAHNAWAZ INTERRUPTED TO SAY THAT HE HAD ALREADY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SHAHI ON MATTER BEFORE FOREIGN SECRETARY LEFT EARLIER IN THE MORNING FOR KARACHI. BOTH HAD FOUND EDIT "OUTRAGEOUS". SHAHNAWAZ ASSURED AMBASSADOR TONE AND SUBSTANCE OF EDIT WERE COMPLETELY CONTRARY TO GOP INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES. HE WAS PARTICULARLY INCENSED AND APOLOGETIC ABOUT PERSONAL ATTACK ON SECRETARY, WHO HE SAID IS WIDELY REGARDED HERE AS A FIRM FRIEND OF PAKISTAN.

4. MFA SENIOR OFFICIAL DEALING WITH US CALLED LATER IN DAY TO REPORT THAT EDIT WAS PRIORITY ITEM IN MEETING OF INFORMATION AND FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICERS THAT MORNING AND THAT INVESTIGATION HAD BEEN LAUNCHED. SHE SAID IT WAS SUSPECTED THAT EDIT HAD BEEN WRITTEN WITH VIEW TOWARD DAMAGING US-PAK RELATIONS. SHE ADDED HER PROFOUND APOLOGIES.

5. SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PM FOR INFORMATION YUSUF BUCH TELEPHONED AMBASSADOR IN EVENING TO REITERATE POINTS MADE EARLIER BY MFA OFFICIALS. HE TOLD AMBASSADOR INVESTIGATION HAD DISCLOSED THAT EDIT, WRITTEN BY NEW WRITER, HAD NOT BEEN CLEARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SOP. THOSE RESPONSIBLE, HE SAID, WERE BEING DISCIPLINED.

6. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO REASON TO DISBELIEVE MFA ASSERTION THAT EDIT WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF LINE WITH OFFICIAL PRESS GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS AND WAS RESULT OF LAPSE. IT CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH MUCH MORE RESTRAINED AND BALANCED POSITION TAKEN ON AGREEMENT IN BOTH GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATELY-OWNED PRESS. (PERSONAL CONDEMNATION OF SECRETARY IS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE UNPRECEDENTED HERE). IN LIGHT OF APOLOGIES OF GOP, WHICH WE BELIEVE IS AS SINCERELY OUTRAGED BY PUBLICATION OF EDIT AS WE ARE, WE DO NOT INTEND TO TAKE ANY FURTHER ACTION HERE AND RECOMMEND THAT NONE BE TAKEN IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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